

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 248011

FOLLOWING REPEAT VIENTIANE 8455 ACTION SECSTATE 13 DEC

QUOTE

N O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 8455

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR, LA, US

SUBJECT: PROPOSED REDUCTIONS IN CUSTOMS NARCOTICS
PERSONNEL

REF: STATE 23979

BEGIN SUMMARY: AMBASSADOR'S DECISION TO REDUCE CUSTOMS
ADVISORY DIVISION (CAD) NARCOTICS PERSONNEL IN LAOS FORM
8 TO 4 BY END FY-74 WAS MAOE AFTER CAREFUL CONSIDERATION
OF (A) EFFECTIVENESS OF ENFORCEMENT SIDE OF NARCOTICS
CONTROL ACTION PLAN IN LAOS; (B) NEED TO REALLOCATE RE-
SOURCES WITHIN THE EXISTING PROGRAM; AND (C) ABSOLUTE
NECESSITY FOR THIS MISSION TO REDUCE ITS OVERALL PROFILE
SO THAT LAO PARTIOTIC FRONT (LPF) HAS SMALLER TARGET AT
WHICH TO AIM ONCE NEW COALITION GOVERNMENT (PGNU) IS
FORMED. END SUMMARY.

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1. AS NOTED IN RECENT EMBASSY REPORTING, A NUMBER OF

FACTORS, INCLUDING IMPACT OF US/RLG NARCOTICS ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS, HAVE REMOVED LAOS--AT LEAST TEMPORARILY--AS A SOURCE OF HEROIN IN THE INTERNATIONAL TRAFFIC. LAOS HAS BECOME A NET IMPORTER OF OPIUM AND THUS A "TARGET NATION" FOR TRAFFICKING MUCH AS US HAS, BUT IT REMAINS A PRODUCER NATION. FOR THIS REASON WE ARE RETAINING A SIZEABLE ANTI-NARCOTICS EFFORT HERE, (I.E. EVEN WITH PROJECTED REDUCTIONS IN PSD AND CAD, WE WILL STILL HAVE SOME 20 AMERICANS WORKING ON VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE PROGRAM).

2. WE BELIEVE THAT 4-MAN CAD NARCOTICS CONTINGENT IN A NATION WHERE ONLY HALF THE POPULATION OF THREE MILLION IS UNDER GOVERNMENT CONTROL AND WHICH IS NOT A MAJOR SOURCE, OR EVEN SIGNIFICANT TRANSIT POINT, FOR HEROIN MOVING TO THE US, CONSTITUTES AN ADEQUATE STAFF TO COPE WITH REMAINING POTENTIAL THREAT HERE. (AS A POINT OF COMPARISON, WE NOTE THAT NUMBER OF CUSTOMS ADVISORS HERE WILL STILL EXCEED NUMBER (THREE) WHICH CUSTOMS INTENDS TO ASSIGN TO THAILAND.) ONE MAN IN BAN HOUET SAI, TO COVER THE NORTH, ANOTHER IN PAKSE, TO COVER THE SOUTH, AND TWO IN VIENTIANE APPEARS ADEQUATE GIVEN PRESENT THREAT.

3. SINCE DECEMBER 1972, THIS MISSION HAS BEEN REDUCED BY MORE THAN 300 AND OTHERS WILL DEPART WITHIN 60 DAYS LTF THE FORMATION OF PGNU, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE TERMS OF THE VIENTIANE ACCORDS. CAD HAS, IN NO WAY, BEEN SINGLED OUT FOR SPECIAL OR HARSH TREATMENT. RATHER, IT HAS BEEN SUCCESSFULLY WORKING ITSELF OUT OF A JOB BY PROMOTING LAO SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN THE CUSTOMS FIELD. (NOTE: MOST RECENT OPIUM SEIZURE IN BAN HOUET SAI WAS AN ALL-LAO AFFAIR.)

4. IN THE POST-PGNU PERIOD, GENERAL KHAMHOU REMAINS CONVINCED THAT GSI REPEAT GSI ANTI-NARCOTICS EFFORTS IN THE RLG ZONE WILL CONTINUE UNHAMPERED BECAUSE OF GSI'S POSITION AS A PART OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE. (PM'S OFFICE WILL NOT EXPERIENCE INFUSION OF LPF PERSONNEL AS WILL ALL RLG MINISTRIES.) AT SAME TIME, LPF PLENIPOTENTIARY AND CHIEF NEGOTIATOR, PHOUMI VONGVICHIT, AS RECENTLY AS OCTOBER 29, IS ON RECORD AS OPPOSING US ANTI-NARCOTICS EFFORTS. HE STATED OVER RADIO PATHET LAO THAT "US IS CONFIDENTIAL

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SUPPOSED TO WITHDRAW FROM LAOS AND OTHER INDOCHINESE AREAS. VIRTUALLY, HOWEVER THE INFLUENCE OF THE US HAS BEEN LEFT HERE TO CARRY OUT ITS AMBITIOUS NEO-COLONIALIST SCHEME. VARIOUS US ORGANIZATIONS, INCLUDING THE CIA, HAVE SEEMINGLY WITHDRAWN FROM VIENTIANE, BUT ACTUALLY THEY ARE STILL HERE. THE ANTI-POIUM MEASURE COMMITTEE (SIC) IN VIENTIANE IS A CAMOUFLAGE FOR CIA ORGANIZATIONS." WE WOULD EXPECT LPF TO PICK THIS THEME UP AGAIN ONCE PGNU IS ESTABLISHED.

5. RE QUESTIONS POSED PARA 4 REFTEL:

A) LPF CONTINUES TO VOICE STRONG OPPOSITION TO NARCOTICS CONSUMPTION AND TRAFFICKING IN ITS CLAIMED ZONE. AT SAME TIME, TRAFFICKING BETWEEN ZONES

EXISTS, ALTHOUGH ITS PRECISE SIZE AND SIZE OF PRODUCTION IN LPF AREA IS NOT KNOWN. WHILE FORMATION OF THE PGNU WILL NOT BE A PANACEA FOR NARCOTICS

PROBLEM, IT MAY, IN LONG RUN, PRODUCE SOME FORM OF INTRA-ZONE COOPERATION IN DRUG FIELD.

B) GIVEN LPF SUSPICION OF USG INTENTIONS, IT IS INCONCEIVABLE THAT LPF WILL ALLOW US NARCOTICS AGENTS TO OPERATE IN ITS ZONE. JCCIA MOBILE TEAM PERSONNEL, MENTIONED REFTEL, WILL BE COMPOSED OF LAO, NOT FOREIGNERS. IN FACT, LPF HAS MADE IT CLEAR THAT, EVEN IN CASUALTY RESOLUTION MATTERS, US PERSONNEL WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO ENTER LPF ZONE TO EXAMINE CRASH SITES, GRAVES, ETC.

C) ARTICLE 10(B) OF PROTOCOL, CONCERNING DUTIES OF JOINT POLICE FORCE TO CHECK TRAVEL OF FOREIGNERS AND TO "PROTECT AIRPORT," COULD MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR CAD ADVISORS TO CONTINUE WORKING AT WATTAY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT. IT IS CONCEIVABLE, HOWEVER, THAT SUCH A JOINT FORCE WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO AN EVEN MORE THOROUGH EXAMINATION OF PERSONNEL, BAGGAGE AND CARGO PASSING THROUGH WATTAY, BUT WE HAVE NO IDEA AS YET JUST HOW SUCH JOINT POLICE FORCE MIGHT OPERATE.

6. IN SUM, EMBASSY FEELS THAT PROPOSED CAD REDUCTION WILL STREAMLINE US/RLG ANTI-NARCOTICS PROGRAM WITHOUT INJURING ITS EFFICIENCY. THERE IS A CONTINUING NEED FOR SKILLED, CONFIDENTIAL

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FLEXIBLE AND EXPERIENCED CUSTOMS ADVISORS IN LAOS, BUT FOUR GOOD MEN CAN DO THE JOB. MOREOVER, BY REDUCING CAD'S PROFILE, ITS CHANCES OF SURVIVING TRANSITION TO PGNU WILL, HOPEFULLY, BE ENHANCED.

7. WE WILL, OF COURSE, KEEP THIS SITUATION UNDER CLOSE SCRUTINY TO SEE WHETHER, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE GOALS ESTABLISHED IN OUR NCAP, OTHER CUTS OR SHIFTS IN EXISTING RESOURCES ARE NECESSITATED BY THE PREVAILING OR PROSPECTIVE DRUG/POLITICAL SITUATION HERE. DEAN UNQUOTE RUSH

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